



TELECOMMUNICATIONS COVID RESPONSE



Recently Util Auditors hosted a webinar to provide valuable insight on how companies can be prepared to manage costs as a result of the changes from Covid-19. Here is a brief overview of some of the highlights from this call:

Charles ("Chuck") is one of the Lead Telecom Auditors with Util Auditors. He has over 20 years of experience auditing billing and contracts from every telecom service and wireless provider in the US.

Chuck, what are the changes in the industry since Covid-19?

There is no "one size fits all" answer to this question. The most prominent is the effect varies by company and industry. The short answer is that it has heightened the awareness of company's disaster recovery and business continuity planning.

What do these changes mean for businesses?

1. Perception of the word "disaster" has lulled some companies into a false sense of security:

- a. Not just hurricane, flood or fire although they are very real.
- b. More common causes reported by a national survey of C-Level IT professionals report:
 - 65% Power failure
 - 65% Network outages
 - 55% Hardware failure

2. Among the host of elements in the periodic tables of disaster include:

- Disgruntled employees
- Vandalism (which includes hacking and cyber security)
- Water damage
- Pandemic

The terms "Disaster Recovery" and "Business Continuity" are often used interchangeably, but they are two different components that work together as part of an organization's recovery planning.

1. Disaster Recovery is primarily concerned with systems and infrastructure and by definition limited in scope with the ultimate goal of complete recovery with a defined period of time.
2. Business Continuity is an attempt to blend the IT emphasis of disaster recovery efforts into a larger-scope determination of which business units and functions must be prevented from interruption, or if interrupted, the priority to which they are restored.
3. Key components include:



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What do these changes mean for businesses? (Continued...)

- a. Emergency response procedures
 - b. Public relations plan
 - c. Damage assessment and insurance claims processing
 - d. A plan to handle phone calls, Web-Site, email ect.
 - e. Executive communication plan
 - f. A communication plan for clients and vendors
 - g. An employee communication plan
 - h. Banking and payroll plan
4. You can have disaster recovery without business continuity but not the other way around.

What are the vendor responses?

1. Customer Premise Equipment (CPE) businesses who rely on in-house equipment have distinct challenges such as fielding inbound calls and accessing systems and applications.
2. Hosted or Cloud Based systems provide greater flexibility, accessibility and redundancy. Hosted VoIP can plug their phones into any internet connection and function as if they were sitting at their desks. Unified Communication applications pass calls to cell phones, voice mails to email and/or text.

Do you Expect these changes to be temporary or permanent moving forward?

The future of your carrier relationship depends on the services a company subscribes to and how they can react to change to mitigate the disaster.

1. Pending orders are being cancelled by the or postponed by the company depending on their short and long term plan.
2. New orders are experiencing prolonged delivery up to 3-4x normal intervals.
3. Payments for carrier services are still due.
 - Suspensions and disconnections due to non-payment vary by carrier, payment history and amount owed.
 - C-LEC's (Competitive Local Exchange Carriers) may provide more flexibility but are obligated to pay incumbent local carriers.
 - Customers will not get services for free forever.



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What are the recommended steps a business can take to protect itself/mitigate risk/stop losses/save money/cut cost?

1. Talk to your carriers and vendors and consultants about your options in developing a short- and long-term strategic plan that fits your company's IT objectives.
2. Conduct a feasibility study to consider an IT refresh that will minimize the impact of future disasters.
3. Conduct an audit of your IT expense and inventory so you can make informed decisions on items #1 and 2.



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